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RESULTS OF FOOD CONSERVATION TEST CAMPAIGNS

With an annual per capita garbage collection averaging 302 pounds, according to one study, 1/ and with a median garbage collection figure of 234 pounds, according to another, 2/ the Food Distribution Administration launched a series of test campaigns in July and August 1943, to determine: (1) whether food wastage has been substantially reduced since the outbreak of war; and (2) whether an organized publicity drive could substantially reduce the amount of usable food that is thrown away. Participating in this test were cities of various sizes, representing every section of the country except the Rocky Mountain area: Kansas City, Mo.; Lansing, Mich.; Tacoma, Wash.; Shreveport, La.; New Kensington, Pa.; Elmira, N. Y.; and Charlotte, N. C.

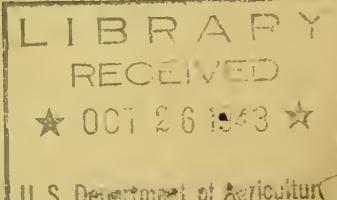
Indications from these test campaigns are: (1) that some reduction of waste has already occurred; and (2) that it is possible to reduce wastage of edible food still further in amounts large enough to influence significantly our national food resources. If the average waste reduction achieved in these cities with a limited publicity drive can be duplicated all over the country with a concerted program of community organization, there will be a saving of at least a million and a half tons of edible food annually among our urban population of eighty million.

On the basis of these preliminary tests, a Nation-wide food conservation program is getting under way, as part of the Food Fights for Freedom campaign. Cooperating in the food conservation program are newspapers, radio stations, schools, and community organizations. And one of the major cooperating units - if the program is to be successful - must be the community Refuse Collection Department. It is the one dependable source of facts on how much food is being wasted locally. It is the one agency that can provide measurements of the amount of normal wastage, and the amount of waste reduction that may occur through the concerted community efforts to save food.

Garbage reports, if based on a careful segregation of food wastage from other refuse, provide dramatic facts to awaken public consciousness to the enormity of our food losses; and by their indication of what can be saved, they provide the chief incentive to continuation of the waste reduction program. Close cooperation by the Refuse Collection Departments is essential to success of the national effort to save food, as it has proved to be in the test campaigns already conducted.

1/ Food Waste Materials: A Survey of Urban Garbage Production, Collection, and Utilization, by Walter H. Stolting, U. S. D. A., Bureau of Agricultural Economics, September 1941.

2/ Refuse Materials, Bulletin No. 8, American Public Works Association, Chicago, 1940.



Garbage Reduction During Test Campaigns

Kansas City, Mo., with 450,000 population, conducted a 2-week campaign August 8 - 22. Comparative garbage collection figures were as follows:

August 1942 -	5,277 tons
August 1943 -	<u>4,262 tons</u>
Saving -	1,015 tons, or 19.2 percent

Pre-campaign period -	1,133 tons
Campaign period -	<u>996 tons</u>
Saving -	167 tons, or 12.09 percent.

Lansing, Mich., with 85,000 population, conducted a 31-day campaign July 25 through August 28. The collection figures were as follows:

July 25 through August 28, 1942 -	2,401,088 pounds
July 25 through August 28, 1943 -	<u>1,825,462 pounds</u>
A saving of - 575,626 pounds or 23.9 percent.	

Residential districts of Lansing accounted for three-fourths of the garbage collected, but analysis of representative samples indicated that homes were responsible for only 54 percent of the edible food waste. According to this analysis, the edible portion of the garbage from residential areas was 12 to 15 percent of the total garbage weight, and the edible portion from commercial sources was 25 to 35 percent of the total weight.

Tacoma's campaign covered 30 days, August 2 - 31. Unsegregated refuse collections of 4,196 tons averaged 50.2 pounds per capita from 165,186 persons, during this period, as against 4,024 tons, or an average of 54.5 pounds per capita from 147,645 persons in 1942. The decrease in collections thus amounted to 7.15 percent from 1942 to 1943. However, in comparing the refuse collected during the 30 days of the campaign with collections during the 30 days in July immediately preceding, a reduction of only 2 percent for the campaign period is noted. This test is not as valid as it might have been if the food wastage had been segregated from the other refuse.

At Charlotte, N. C., a city of 100,000 population, truckload collections of mixed refuse during the campaign period, from July 15 to August 15, were reduced from a 1942 figure of 1,355 to a 1943 figure of 967 - a decrease of 388 truckloads or 28 percent. Although no segregation of edible food products was made, the following conclusions were reached:

1. There has been a substantial decrease in food waste during the last year.
2. The downward trend continued during and after the campaign.
3. The percentage of edible garbage from all homes included in the total waste going to the incinerator is now so small that it is difficult to detect when mixed with so much inedible garbage.
4. The major portion of edible waste now comes from produce houses, grocery stores, army camps, and individuals.

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During the campaign itself, truckloads dropped from 1,662 during the first 2 weeks to 967 during the second 2 weeks, - a decrease of 38 percent. Weekly peaks dropped from 110 loads on the first Tuesday to 100 loads on the fifth Tuesday, with Saturday light collections dropping correspondingly from 56 to 47 loads. Again this was a countermovement during a period of increased use of garbage-producing perishable foods.

Twenty-four thousand Clean Plate Club members were pledged during the Charlotte campaign.

Shreveport, La., carried on a month's campaign among its 100,000 population, while plagued by an epidemic of infantile paralysis. A manpower shortage made adequate garbage collection impossible; but a skilfully conducted press campaign brought in 7,500 Clean Plate pledges, and street comments from Shreveport citizens indicated that the campaign had "taken."

No garbage data were available from New Kensington, Pa., a small community of approximately 25,000 people, in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. Questionnaires on food — use habits were used in this community as well as in Elmira, N.Y., a farming center of 45,000, where a number of defense industries are now located.

Mixed refuse collections for Elmira showed an increase during the 10-day campaign of 45,600 pounds over the 1942 figure of 1,434,200 pounds. The explanation offered for this rise indicates one of the many special problems which arose throughout the test areas. Irregular deliveries to markets in Elmira resulted in periodic over-supplies which failed to move in spite of drastic price mark-downs. Produce arrived at wholesale houses in unsalable condition as a result of the lack of refrigeration. As defense industries picked up the employment slack, markets for second or low-grade produce disappeared. If the test period had been longer, this special factor might have been cancelled out.

Need for Careful Measurement

Measurements, it will be noted, were not standardized — no collection unit was set up as the yardstick to use; but it must be equally apparent that some adequate measurement was necessary — whether truckload, pound, or ton.

Figures representing mixed waste offer only, at best, a conjecture of food waste content. They are of little value as guides in the conduct of campaigns having one major objective — the saving of edible food. Of but little more value from this point of view are highly refined breakdowns in terms of cash value or nutritive value, rather than quantity, of wasted food. Analysis of the garbage into types of food waste, however — baked goods, meat and fish, vegetables and fruits — is both useful and important. We cannot stop waste effectively until we know what it is that we are wasting.

This can only be determined by adequate, carefully measured samples from typical areas. The accuracy and value of all other food-waste data depend on the reliability of these basic measurements.

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